

Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of)
)
Amendment of Part 74 of the Commission's) MB Docket No. 18-119
Rules Regarding FM Translator Interference)

To: The Commission

**COMMENTS
OF
BEAVER SPRINGS FAITH BAPTIST CHURCH, INC.**

Beaver Springs Faith Baptist Church, Inc. ("Beaver Springs"), by Counsel, and pursuant to the *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking ("NPRM"), FCC 18-60 (released May 10, 2018)* submits these Comments in opposition to certain elements of the proposal to streamline the FCC's rules and procedures relating to interference caused by FM translators. Beaver Springs is the licensee of noncommercial Radio Stations WFBM-FM (Beaver Springs, Pennsylvania), WFBA-FM (Kulpmont, Pennsylvania) and WFBV-FM (Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania). Each of Beaver Springs' radio stations provides service to loyal listeners well beyond the station's 54 dBu contour. Beaver Springs has numerous sponsors and supporters in those areas. So should the FCC adopt some of the proposals outlined in this proceeding, Beaver Springs will lose a measurable number of listeners and supporters.

Each of Beaver Springs' radio stations is a small market, listener supported religious radio station. Attached is a letter-statement from Beaver Springs' Pastor Denton Mallonee which shows that each station's support comes from many local listeners beyond the 54 dBu contour. To offer translator interference at the 54dbu contour from FM translators would

seem to guarantee a tremendous disservice to Beaver Springs' local, loyal listener support base.

Beaver Springs understands the motivation behind this rulemaking in light of the AM Revitalization efforts but the FCC's efforts to revitalize the AM radio service should not concomitantly degrade the FM radio service. If all the rules and policies proposed in this proceeding are adopted, the demise of the FM radio service will occur.

Under the current rules, FM translators are required to protect both full service and first in line licensed secondary facilities to not just their respective protected class contour but also to the extent of these stations' "listenable signal." The listenable signal of WFBM, WFBV and WFBA reaches a wide area beyond the station's 54 dBu contour

While there may be situations where an FM translator is limited by its interference with a full power FM station beyond the 54 dBu contour of the full power FM station, a change to the rules would expose each full power FM station to further erosion of its audience. Terrestrial radio is already beleaguered by online music services, YouTube and podcasts that have caused many people to migrate away from the FM radio band. Along with these new trends we have seen considerable sponsorship dollars move away from terrestrial broadcasting to online broadcasting.

For example, listeners to National Public Radio stations are aging faster than the overall radio audience and listening less to the network's most popular radio programs according to data shared by the NPR Network. Though NPR is seeing some listening gains on digital platforms, particularly with podcasts, its broadcast audience has dropped. Average-quarter-hour listening during morning drive time dropped 11 percent from 2011 to 2015, and afternoon drive audience declined 6 percent. The only age bracket that increased during that time was

the 65-plus audience. See, *Current*, “Drop in younger listeners makes dent in NPR news audience,” October 16, 2015. About 50% of Americans now listen to online radio. See, *Radio & Internet News*, www.rainnews.com, March 11, 2016.

Beaver Springs believes that, to provide a level of administrative certainty to these types of proceedings, there should be a full-power station field strength value beyond which no complaint of actual or predicted interference will be considered actionable but the 54 dBu value is not appropriate for this cutoff point. Since Beaver Springs has numerous regular listeners well beyond the 54 dBu contour of each of its radio stations, we believe that a lower value field strength would be more appropriate than the 54 dBu as a cutoff for interference complaints.

New technologies and changing listener habits are challenging enough to traditional terrestrial broadcasting. We do not need to be taking any action that further contributes to the degradation of the FM radio service. A careful balance needs to be achieved.

FM translator stations have always been licensed on a secondary basis, and they should continue to be licensed that way. FM translator stations should not be provided equal or near-equal status to full power FM radio stations as the regulatory obligations for an FM translator station license will remain much less burdensome than a full power FM radio station license. There must be reasonable limits. We cannot rob Peter to pay Paul, but that is exactly what is proposed here as the efforts here to help the FM translator service will degrade the full power FM radio service.

In the NPRM the Commission states “we believe that it is necessary to consider how best to balance our enduring interest in maintaining the technical integrity of our FM services with our desire to promote greater certainty and stability for translator licensees.” See, *NPRM at para. 27*. Beaver Springs believes that such balancing should not include any geographical

limit on where a full power FM station has listeners that live, work or drive, or where the full power FM station derives listener support and sponsorship support. Therefore, the protected zone for full power FM radio stations must go beyond the 54 dBu contour.

This proceeding should focus on the heart of the complaint process. If the Commission were to adopt the more stringent and standardized content requirements for a listener complaint and a minimum number of listener complaints that must support an interference complaint then an adequate balance will have been achieved without the need for an unreasonable outer contour limit.

Since one of the goals in this proceeding is to provide more certainty and efficiency to FM translator interference proceedings then a significant step in that direction would be for the FCC to create what it believes is a model interference complaint questionnaire to be used FM translator interference proceedings. Presently the FCC relies upon broadcasters to elicit such information and often those questionnaires vary widely from case to case. A standardized form would not only elicit exactly the type of information the FCC requires but it would also reduce the gamesmanship that accompanies these proceedings. The standardized form would need to be sworn to under the penalty of perjury, and possibly executed in the presence of a Notary to ensure the legitimacy of each complainant.

The use of a standardized form released by the FCC would also serve to show each listener complainant that their responses would definitely be scrutinized by a federal agency, and that their continued cooperation would be necessary. This would separate the genuine complainant who seriously wants these matters resolved from the casual complainant who may not really care but nonetheless loaned their name to the effort with no desire to follow up, if necessary.

Heading off a drawn-out and often expensive interference complaint proceeding is to the benefit of all involved parties, especially with regard to the scarce resources of the FCC. Costs to prosecute translator interference claims can result in thousands of dollars of legal and engineering fees. The use of a standardized complaint form would streamline the process and reduce the overall expenses of all involved parties.

Finally, Beaver Springs agrees with the aspect of the proposal that in response to an interference complaint an FM translator station should be allowed to modify anywhere on the FM dial and still be considered a minor change application. The routine acceptance of these types of displacement modification applications would certainly facilitate the resolution of many FM translator interference complaints.

Respectfully submitted,

BEAVER SPRINGS FAITH BAPTIST CHURCH, INC.

By: 

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08/01/2018

To whom it may concern:

Please note our response to the proposed rule change (MB Docket 18-119) regarding the limiting of our contour protection area to 54 dBu. As non-commercial, listener-supported stations, reducing our coverage area would greatly reduce our listener and support base. I have listed the localities we service, and from which we receive support, which are located between the 54 and 50 dBu contours.

WFBM, 90.5FM, Beaver Springs, PA: Alfarata, Millersburg, Middleburg, Port Royal, Newport, Belltown, Bannerville, Coon Hunter, Cowan, Cocalamus, Cuba Mills, Dalmatia, Dornsife, Harleton, Icksburg, Kantz, Kissimmee, Laurelton, Mifflin, Mifflintown, Reeds Gap, Thompsonstown, Shindle.

WFBV, 90.1FM, Selinsgrove, PA: Seven Stars, Milton, West Milton, Lykens, Mifflinburg, Millersburg, Cowan, Dalmatia, Dornsife, Forrest Hill, Glen Iron, Halifax, Harleton, Paxinos, Stonington, Snyderstown, Van Wert, Middle Creek, Mazeppa, Laurelton, Pillow, Urban, Herndon.

WFBA, 90.5FM, Kulpmont, PA: Frackville, Pottsville, Berwick, Lykens, Almedia, Tower City, Paxinos, Gratz, Riverside, Jerseytown, Lightstreet, Shenandoah, Danville, Girardville.

This information is based on correspondence we received.

Thank you for your consideration,



Denton Mallonee, DD, (General Manager, WFBM, WFBV, & WFBA)